In the State of Syria the disquiet may be traced back to that opposition to the general policy of the Mandatory Power which has been analyzed in Chapter IX. The opposition was strengthened by the many administrative and economic grievances which have also been dealt with. It found expression in a number of local disturbances and risings at the very beginning of the French occupation, the most notable of them the revolt of Ibrahim Hananu in North Syria and the rising in the Hauran. As time went on the restlessness was increased still further by the instability of French policy: the appointment and recall of a number of High Commissioners; the consequent changes in the higher personnel of the mandatory administration; the creation and then the dissolution of a Federation. These were further causes of disquiet: the repercussion in Syria of the growing hostility of the Palestinian Arabs to Zionism and to British policy, and the activities of Syrian emigrants, particularly of the Syro-Palestinian Committees in Cairo and in Geneva. Of the group in Geneva the leading spirit was the Amir Shakib Arslan, a distinguished writer and publicist, by origin a Lebanese Druze, who had given all his life to the spread first of Pan-Islamic and then of Pan-Arab ideas.

All these factors contributed to create a strong opposition to French rule; it was led and organized by the 'People's Party', which grew rapidly in the years prior to the revolt. The nationalist opposition was to some extent concerned with general Arab problems: the independence and union of the whole Arab world. In local matters, its main purposes were two. First, it advocated the union of the French Mandated Territories. Jebel Druze and the Alawi region, it was claimed, should be wholly incorporated in the State of Syria; Lebanon was to be at most autonomous within a Syrian or Arab State, and was to be shorn of the territories assigned to it in 1920. Secondly, Syria should be given genuine self-government immediately, and complete independence as soon as possible. This would involve on the one hand the relaxation of French control over the administration; on the other a rigid definition of the points at which and the period for which French armed forces could be maintained in Syria, and ultimately their complete withdrawal. It was around these two points that Franco-Syrian relations revolved throughout the period of the Mandate.

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might arise; in default of an agreement, it would take appropriate measures to maintain order and to guarantee peace. The Mandatory Power desired to favour and hasten the political evolution of the States under its protection, and to promote their economic development. As for the 'Common Interests', the High Commissioner would continue to administer them with the active and ever-increasing assistance of the representatives of the States.[1]

A few months later, in February, 1928, M. Ponsot judged that the time had come for the election of a Constituent Assembly. In that month the state of siege declared at the beginning of the revolt was finally raised, the censorship suppressed, the special tribunals established during the revolt abolished, and a general amnesty issued. At the same time Damad Ahmad Nami's Ministry was replaced by a new provisional Government of 'moderate' politicians presided over by Shaikh Taj ad-Din al-Hasani, with the task of preparing the way for the creation of regular institutions to which it could hand over its functions.

The elections were held in April of the same year. In the towns, most of those elected belonged to the more uncompromising section of the nationalists, the opponents of Shaikh Taj ad-Din's Ministry; in the countryside, however, they were mainly moderates. Of the seventy members of the Assembly, over two-thirds supported the Government, but owing to their lack of cohesion and the decision of the Government not to intervene in the proceedings, it was the so-called 'extreme' nationalists who dominated the discussions. They were the more powerful in that they had recovered from the confusion caused by the collapse of the revolt, and had succeeded once more in organizing themselves in a party, the 'National Bloc'. In so far as it had a founder he was Ibrahim Hananu, an Aleppine and a man respected even by his opponents. The Bloc was not a unitary party so much as a working alliance of individuals and groups. It included leading members of important landowning families, like Jamil Mardam Bey from Damascus, Saadullah al-Jabiri from Aleppo, and Hashim al-Atasi, the President of the Bloc. It included also individuals important rather for character and intellect than for representing large sections of opinion, like Faris al-Khuri, a Protestant lawyer, law-teacher and financier. It

[1] For text, see *Orient Moderne*, September, 1927, pp. 409–11.

665 was supported by several groups which preserved something of their individuality inside the alliance. The most important of them was the 'Istiqeal' group, descended from one of the secret societies of the years before 1914. It advocated the complete independence of the Arab countries and tended to be more uncompromising than the other constituent elements of the Bloc. Its leader was Shukri al-Quwatli. Among its other prominent members were Nabih al-Azmah, the Amir Adil Arslan, and Riyadh as-Sulh, perhaps the most important Arab nationalist leader in Lebanon.

646 One of the most prominent of the members of the Bloc,
642 Hashim al-Atasi, was elected President of the Assembly when it met in Damascus in June, 1928; while Ibrahim Hananu became President of the Commission set up to draft the Constitution. The Commission completed its work by August,
642 and laid its draft before the Assembly. The Constitution which it had drawn up was modelled on those of Western democratic countries, and provided for the exercise of legislative powers by a single Chamber elected by universal suffrage, and of executive powers by an elected President and a responsible Ministry. In addition it contained guarantees for the rights of individuals and communities. Thus Article 6 stipulated that all Syrians should be equal before the law, and there should be no inequality of treatment on grounds of religion, sect, race or language. Article 15 guaranteed liberty of conscience, the free exercise of all forms of worship, and the safeguarding of the religious interests and personal status of every sect. Article 28 guaranteed the rights of the religious communities, including their right to establish schools, teaching in their own language, subject to the principles laid down by law; and Article 37 declared that the electoral law to be issued subsequently would provide for the representation of religious minorities. (This provision was carried out. Each Parliament elected since 1930 has contained a number of representatives of the minorities, roughly proportionate to their size.)

648 In general the draft was acceptable to the High Com-
642 missioner, but there were certain articles to the inclusion of which he objected. Thus Article 2 declared that the Syrian territories detached from the Ottoman Empire constituted an indivisible political unity, which was unaffected by the divisions which had arisen between the end of the war and the

present time. This was a denial of the separate existence of Jebel Druze, the Alawi district, the Lebanese Republic, Palestine and Transjordan; and M. Ponsot judged it to be irreconcilable both with France's international obligations and with the existing situation in fact and in law. Again, four other Articles asserted the right of the President of the Republic to grant pardons, conclude treaties, appoint representatives abroad and proclaim martial law (73, 74, 75 and 112); and Article 110 declared that the organization of the army would form the subject of a special law. These five Articles also the High Commissioner thought to be incompatible with the obligations of France. He therefore asked that the Articles concerned should be separated from the general body of the draft. The Assembly refused, and M. Ponsot thereupon adjourned it for three months in August, 1928, and for a further three in November. He made an alternative suggestion, that the Assembly should modify the wording of Article 2 and should retain the other offending articles but add to the draft a general reservation safeguarding France's international obligations. This also proved abortive, since he and the Assembly could not agree upon a text for the reservation.

In February, 1929, the work of the Assembly was prorogued *sine die*. During this period and throughout 1929 the split between the National Bloc and 'moderates' grew ever wider. The former, while remaining tranquil, demanded the negotiation of a Treaty to replace the Mandate; the latter continued to advocate a policy of co-operation with France, and attempted without much success to form an effective political organization. The High Commissioner found it impossible to reach an agreement with the nationalists on the constitutional question, while the 'moderates' were too weak and divided for their support to be of value to him; he therefore felt himself bound to give up the attempt to entrust to the Syrian people the responsibility for the elaboration of their own constitution. Accordingly he dissolved the Constituent Assembly in May, 1930, and on his own initiative issued a Constitution for the State of Syria. It was to come into force after the election of the members of a Chamber of Deputies, at a date to be fixed by the High Commissioner.

This Constitution was virtually the same as that drafted by the Assembly, except for such changes as were necessary to

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from the Mandatory Power to the Syrian Government being completed within four years.[1]

The Treaty was immediately laid before the Chamber. Its reception by the nationalists inside and outside the Chamber was so unfavourable as to make it clear that it had no chance of acceptance. Accordingly the High Commissioner suspended the sittings of the Chamber, withdrew from its cognizance the terms of the Treaty, and authorized the President of the Republic to govern provisionally by means of decree-laws. A year later, in November, 1934, he suspended the Chamber *sine die*. These acts aroused the resentment and indignation of the nationalists, but in general the country remained quiet, apart from local and ephemeral disturbances, throughout 1934 and 1935. In March, 1934, the Government of Haqqi al-Azm was replaced by that of Shaikh Taj ad-Din al-Hasani, which continued in office for practically two years.

13

Perhaps the most important development of the early 1930's was the growth of a number of political parties with a special appeal to the educated youth of the towns, and therefore of great significance in a country whose political circumstances gave peculiar weight to the actions of the young. Very different from one another in their doctrines and their aims, these parties were alike in that they endeavoured to establish a degree of organization and cohesion which older parties had not for the most part possessed ; alike, too, in that they tried to base their activities not upon gusts of feeling or some immediate objective, but upon systematic and reasoned doctrines. They expressed and attempted to direct the spirit of the youth of Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo and the other towns : a restless youth, discontented both with its foreign masters and with its own older generation, conscious of talents and ideas and cramped by lack of opportunity, drawn simultaneously towards and away from the West, eager and suspicious, hasty and thoughtful. Even when the youth-movements took a paramilitary form, that does not necessarily mean that they were Fascist ; they were merely endeavouring to satisfy certain human needs which in more fortunate

[1] For text, see Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban, 1933* (Paris, 1934), pp. 189–95.

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countries are satisfied by days of national celebration, by military service and voluntary organizations.

One of these organizations was the 'Syrian National Party', founded by Antun Saadeh, a Lebanese Christian brought up in South America. This Party professed or rather formulated the specific Syrian as distinct from Arab nationalism which has already been mentioned.[1] At first a secret society, it was discovered by the authorities in 1935, and its leading members imprisoned. From that time it grew in size and importance, in spite of the many obstacles in its path. These obstacles were of various types: the hostility of the authorities, who more than once dissolved the party; the opposition of the Arab nationalists, who regarded it as a separatist movement; and the widespread belief that the party was in too close touch with European Fascism. That it was able to hold its own was also due to several factors. First, it made a more determined effort than any other organization to think out the whole national problem in all its aspects, and to formulate a programme in the light of clear and valid political principles. Again, it was rigidly organized on the membership principle, with a hierarchy, a logical division of functions and a strict discipline. Finally, its leader was a man of courage, decision and powerful intellect.

The party reached its zenith a year or two before the beginning of the war. It had several thousand adherents, largely but not exclusively Lebanese Christians. With the departure of the leader for South America in 1938 a decline set in, but whether temporary or permanent has still to be seen.

Simultaneously there grew up a number of Arab nationalist youth organizations. The most influential of them was the League of National Action, which tried to weld into a unity the youth of all the Arab countries. Its form was that of a federation of local societies. It stood for the independence and union of the Arab world, and was not prepared to accept any agreement with the Western Powers unless they should completely renounce their imperialist designs. Its programme was formulated at a conference held in Lebanon in 1933, and for some years after that it flourished in the Syrian towns. But it was never important in the other Arab countries, and even in Syria it suffered an irreparable blow by the death of

[1] See Chapter VI.

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S 665 its first President and most important member, Abdur-Razzaq ad-Dandashi.

One of the principles of the League was to hold itself aloof from established Governments and leaders. In this it differed from the Nationalist Youth. An offshoot of the National Bloc, with a paramilitary organization, the Nationalist Youth rose to prominence in 1935 and 1936. Its doctrines were not greatly different from those of the League, but the two groups wasted much of their strength in conflict with one another.

L 665 In addition to the Syrian and Arab nationalist groups, there arose a Lebanese nationalist party, the 'Phalanges Libanaises'. It was not strictly a political organization, and indeed tried to remain independent of Governments and politicians. Its purpose was to arouse among all sections of Lebanese youth a consciousness of the separate existence and destiny of Lebanon, and of their duty to it; and to give them the discipline and opportunities of service without which they could not fulfil that duty. Although in principle open to members of all religious communities, in practice the majority of its adherents, like its leader, Pierre Jumayyil, were Maronites educated by the Jesuits. Its main rival in Lebanon was a Moslem organization with Pan-Arab doctrines, the 'Najjadah'.

S L 665 Finally, there was the Communist Party, which continued to work steadily and unobtrusively among the young intellectuals and the few groups of organized and class-conscious urban workers. Small in numbers, it had several able leaders and exercised a certain influence through its newspaper and its other publications.

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631 National Bloc, Mazhar Raslan as Governor of Latakia and Nasib al-Bakri as Governor of Jebel Druze.

648 642 Although the Treaty had not yet been ratified by the French Parliament, it was agreed that the transitional period should be regarded as starting on January 1st, 1937. A beginning was made with the transfer to the Syrian Government of functions hitherto exercised by the French authorities. The Government was given the right freely to prepare and carry out its budget, and a certain control over the police; in principle the High Commissioner ceased to exercise his right to veto legislation, and the 'conseillers' to control ministerial acts. But the Mandatory Power still retained the conduct of foreign relations, the ultimate responsibility for public order and certain administrative services such as the supervision of the Beduin tribes.

665 186 These events seemed to show that the policy of the Bloc was successful. It was still united; it had an overwhelming majority in the Chamber; its adherents filled the offices of the Government; it commanded a large measure of support in the country, especially among the younger generation.

Opposition to the Bloc existed, but it was so far largely inarticulate and undirected. It consisted of a handful of Deputies; of some extreme Arab nationalist organizations, which refused to recognize the Mandate and regarded co-operation with the French as treason; and of the separatist movements among the Alawis and Druzes and in the Jazirah.

The hopes of Syrian independence reached their climax in the celebrations which marked the return to Syria of the newly-amnestied exiles, Dr. Shahbandar and Sultan al-Atrash in May, 1937, the Amir Shakib Arslan and Ihsan al-Jabiri in June. It seemed as if the country were entering upon a new period of national construction under leaders whose patriotic energy had only been strengthened by disappointment, imprisonment, and long years of exile.

5

648 The next two years saw the collapse of these hopes. The claims of Turkey to Alexandretta, the growth of separatist movements, the failure of the French Government to secure the ratification of the Treaty, the unrest caused by the disturbances in Palestine, the administrative failure of the Nationalist Government and finally the growth of an internal

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suspension of the Constitution and the complete breakdown of the policy of 1936.

II

The Bloc was the more incapable of weathering such a crisis, because by now there had appeared a strong nationalist opposition to it. Already in 1936 such a potential opposition had existed ready to take shape so soon as, on the one hand, the Bloc disappointed hopes, and on the other an alternative leader or group of leaders appeared. At the time neither of the two conditions was fulfilled. The Bloc was at the height of its success; and the few Deputies who opposed it were neither prominent nor strong enough to become popular leaders.

During the next few years, however, matters changed. The Bloc gradually lost a great part of its popularity, on account of its failure to secure the ratification of the Treaty and its impotence in the face of Turkish designs upon Alexandretta. The natural tendency of Governments in office to disappoint individual hopes and create individual grievances worked in the same direction.

The discontent was increased by the comparative failure of the Government in internal administration. Among the causes of failure were the inadequate powers of the Government, the widespread belief that it did not enjoy the backing of the French authorities, its own lack of experience and the absence of an efficient civil service; but it was nevertheless discouraging to its supporters and irritating to ordinary citizens. On the whole the departments were no better administered than they had been; and there was a succession of petty acts of discrimination against members of minorities. The relations between the central and local authorities were often difficult, the tendency to excessive centralization conflicting with the innate localism of some of the provinces. This conflict had indeed existed before the nationalists came to power, and in order to end it, the High Commissioner had issued a decree on provincial organization in January, 1936. Besides altering the number and boundaries of the provinces, this decree had defined the scope of the central and local authorities and provided for the establishment of provincial councils. In spite of declarations, this decree was never fully applied.

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the Defence of Palestine, in Damascus. Nationalists in Syria 648 regarded the struggle of the Palestinian Arabs as their own struggle; and their opposition to French policy was strengthened and sustained by the constant thought of the battle which their fellow-countrymen were waging against Zionism and the policy of the Balfour Declaration.

The conditions for the growth of an opposition now existed. 665 Its leader was found in Dr. Abdur-Rahman Shahbandar. A well-educated, intelligent and masterful Damascene, he had been Foreign Minister under Faisal, and had played an important part in the revolt of 1925-1926. Sentenced to death by the French, he had taken up residence in Egypt. He returned to Syria after the amnesty to the political exiles in May, 1937. This first visit of his lasted only a month, but he found time publicly to declare his opposition to the party of the National Bloc—an opposition due partly perhaps to his disbelief in the policy of co-operation with the French, but partly also, there can be no doubt, to pique at seeing the leadership of the nationalist movement in other hands than his.

He was absent from Syria for the rest of the year 1937, but at the end of the year he came out into the open with a manifesto accusing Jamil Mardam Bey of having made inacceptable concessions to the French Government during his recent visit to Paris, and of having done nothing to defend Syrian rights in Alexandretta. He soon gathered around him a number of those who for one reason or another were dissatisfied with the Government of the Bloc.

In February, 1938, the Government replied to Dr. Shahbandar's memorandum by arresting his leading supporters, on the charge of having distributed a seditious manifesto repeating his accusations. Despite their denial of the charge, they were all sentenced to several months' detention, but the sentences were reduced after a re-trial.

Two months later, the crystallization of Dr. Shahbandar's supporters into a definite political group was marked by the issue of a manifesto, signed by Zaki al-Khatib in the name of the 'Free National Front'. It stated that any interference in the internal affairs of Syria on the pretext of defending minorities would be regarded as an infringement of national sovereignty; that any detachment of Syrian territory in order to transfer it to another State or to retain it under the Mandate would be considered an infraction of the Treaty;

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that all projects for retaining French preponderance in the Mixed Courts would be equivalent to maintaining the yoke of the Capitulations; that any partial removal of the schools from national control would be incompatible with national unity, and a danger to national culture; that any delay in handing over the control of the army would open Syria to the danger of aggression; and that any linking of the Syrian currency to a foreign currency, or any petroleum concession which did not assure to Syria a fair proportion of the proceeds, would be a menace to the country's prosperity. The manifesto, which was obviously an attack upon the concessions made or supposed to have been made by Jamil Mardam on his recent visit to France, ended by declaring that Syria would not accept any Treaty which gave it fewer rights than those possessed by Iraq.

The Government replied by confining Dr. Shahbandar to his house when he returned once more to Syria in July, 1938; by arresting once more those of his followers who had been arrested in February; and by suspending their newspaper. But the opposition continued and the end of the year saw the formation of a 'Constitutional Bloc' consisting of 27 deputies, including not only the immediate followers of Dr. Shahbandar but also some of the representatives of the Beduin, the Druzes, the Alawis and the inhabitants of the Jazirah.

Very many, however, of those who were discontented with the way in which things were going grouped themselves not around Dr. Shahbandar but around Shukri al-Quwatli, who had been a member of Mardam Bey's Ministry at first, but had resigned from it in March, 1938. From that time onwards he remained not indeed openly hostile to the Ministry, but critical of it, and voiced the opinion of those who would accept no compromise in the struggle for Arab unity and independence. He had the support, among others, of a section of the League of National Action, which had never shown more than an uneasy acquiescence in the rule of the Bloc. Another section of the League, however, held itself aloof from all established politicians and regarded even the unamended Treaty of 1936 as too great a sacrifice of the national interests. This independence of established powers was professed also by a new youth-organization, the 'Arab Club', of which the leaders, although not the rank and file, were suspected of too close a contact with Nazi ideas and agents.

Against the opposition of these two youth-movements, the Bloc's own organization, the Nationalist Youth, was almost powerless. It had taken a leading part in the disturbances of 1936, but when the leaders of the Bloc came to power it proved more of a nuisance than an asset and was quietly silenced by them.

12

The final crisis was delayed for a time by the arrival of the new French High Commissioner, M. Gabriel Puaux, who had been chosen to succeed M. de Martel in the previous October. M. Puaux left France for Syria at the beginning of January, 1939. The belief that he was coming to bury the Treaty explains why, when M. Puaux landed at Beirut on January 8th, his arrival was marked by some enthusiasm in Lebanon, but by hostility and manifestations in favour of Syrian unity in the cities of the interior. The tension was heightened rather than relieved by a broadcast speech of the High Commissioner on January 11th, in which he reminded the nationalists that France had a mission to maintain order and justice in the Levant, and that 'were she to withdraw or her forces to be weakened, Syrian patriots would see their dearest dreams disappear.'

Shortly afterwards M. Puaux made his first visit to Damascus. It was marked by strikes, and other measures of protest against the failure of the French Parliament to ratify the Treaty. A ministerial crisis seemed imminent; but after heated discussions in the Chamber, it was agreed that the Ministry should remain in office and no steps be taken until M. Puaux had had time to study the situation and form his opinion upon it.

M. Puaux spent the remainder of January visiting the different parts of the country. Disturbances and tension continued, and he had hardly completed his travels when a crisis occurred.

In March, 1936, the High Commissioner had issued a decree determining the rights of the officially recognized religious communities in matters of personal status, and the relations between the communities. It aroused considerable opposition in orthodox Moslem circles, partly because they believed its provisions to be contrary to those of Islamic law, but more fundamentally because it treated the Moslems as one sect

648 of Nations on April 18th, 1941, they regarded the juridical
186 basis of French Mandatory rule as having disappeared.

Political meetings and demonstrations being forbidden, nationalist uneasiness remained for the most part beneath the surface throughout 1940. But it revealed itself in the press of other Arab countries and the activities of their Governments; this was especially true of Iraq. Thus in July, 1940, Nuri as-Said, then Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs, visited Ankara, Beirut and Damascus in order to discuss with the Turkish and French authorities and with prominent Syrians and Lebanese the future of the French Mandated Territories. At the conclusion of his journey he issued a statement to the effect that both the Turkish and Iraqi Governments thought that Syria should be for the Syrians and that the country should enjoy complete independence.

665 A symptom of the prevalent unrest was the murder of Dr.
662 Shahbandar in Damascus in the same month, while his political influence was at its height. Within a few days his assassins were arrested. After the preliminary investigation had been completed a special tribunal was set up to try them and certain other persons believed to be implicated in the crime. Among the latter were three of the leaders of the National Bloc, Jamil Mardam Bey, Saadullah al-Jabiri and Lutfi al-Haffar. They were accused of deliberate complicity in the assassination. Almost at the same time as the accusation against them was published, all three left Syria for Baghdad.

The trial of the accused persons began in December, 1940. In the course of it the leader of the assassins made a complete confession: their motive in deciding to kill Dr. Shahbandar had been religious, since they regarded him as one of those responsible for the decay of Islam; they had tried to throw the blame for their crime upon the leaders of the Bloc, who in reality had had nothing to do with it. The trial ended at the beginning of January, with the condemnation of six persons to death and several others to imprisonment, and the complete exoneration of Jamil Mardam Bey, Lutfi al-Haffar and Saadullah al-Jabiri. The sentences were carried out immediately.

4

000 At the beginning of 1941 the unrest which had been for so

000 Lebanon the Government of Sami as-Sulh succeeded that of
645 Ahmad ad-Da'uq. In Syria, Hasan al-Hakim resigned in April, 1942, and was succeeded by Husni al-Barazi, who himself gave way in January, 1943, to Jamil al-Ulshi. These changes had only a very limited significance.

648 This failure to restore the constitutional Government
186 increased the discontent which had already been caused in both Syria and Lebanon by the way in which their independence had been proclaimed. The administrative methods of the Free French officials were also much criticized; more particularly, a general contempt was felt for the many officials who had served Vichy and had only gone over to Free France after the occupation of the country in 1941. Thus the belief grew up that Syria and Lebanon had gained nothing by their change of masters. It was a belief held not only by the political classes but by ordinary citizens who resented the inefficiency of the French administration; not only by Arab nationalists but even by many of the Lebanese Christians, who could not feel towards the Free French the admiration, gratitude and trust which they had had for France as a great Power. In the circumstances it was natural that Great Britain should be largely blamed for the actions of her ally.

645 One consequence of the discontent was a revival in the
665 power of the National Bloc. The dissensions between its leaders were patched up, and the Bloc united in its demand for the restoration of the Chamber of 1936-1939 or else the holding of fresh elections. Its spokesman was Shukri al-Quwatli, whose reputation had grown steadily throughout the years. In October, 1941, shortly after the Allied occupation, he absented himself from Syria on a visit to Arabia and Iraq; but after his return to Damascus in September, 1942, he became once more the dominant figure of the political scene. Side by side with the revival of the Bloc there went a growth in the size and influence of the Socialist and Communist movements; this was due not so much to the spread of Marxist doctrines as to the universal discontent with the existing order and the eagerness to snatch at any hope of change.

14

722 In Syria and Lebanon alike, the attention of the greater part of the population was concentrated upon the economic problems of the war. Two of them were peculiarly important.

722 been for the large programme of public works undertaken by the Ninth Army; they include the construction of a railway line between Haifa and Tripoli, the building of roads and the execution of schemes of irrigation.

15

648 After long hesitation, the Free French at last decided to
642 restore constitutional government. This step was made easier in Syria by the death of Shaikh Taj in January, 1943. A few days later M. Helleu, who was deputizing for General Catroux, absent in North Africa, announced that the General would authorize the re-establishment of the Constitution on his return to the Levant. In March, 1943, provisional Governments were established in both Syria and Lebanon in order to make the necessary arrangements for the elections; that in Syria was headed by Ata al-Ayyubi, that in Lebanon by Dr. Ayyub Tabit.

666 In Syria the arrangements were soon completed. It was
646 decided that the Chamber should consist of 124 deputies,
665 including a number of representatives of the minorities; and that the elections for it should be held in two stages. The primary elections were held on July 10th-11th, the secondary on July 26th. They resulted in an overwhelming majority for the National Bloc. The victory of the Bloc was more complete in Damascus than in Aleppo, where there was a split in the nationalist ranks.

643 On August 17th, 1943, the new Chamber met and elected
645 Shukri al-Quwatli President of the Republic and Faris al-Khuri President of the Chamber. A few days later a new Ministry took office, drawn almost wholly from the Bloc. It was constituted as follows:

Prime Minister	Saadullah al-Jabiri.
Minister for Foreign Affairs	Jamil Mardam Bey.
Minister of the Interior ..	Lutfi al-Haffar.
Minister of Finance ..	Khalid al-Azm.
Minister of Defence and Public Instruction ..	Nasuhi al-Bukhari.
Minister of Public Works and Supplies	Mazhar Raslan.
Minister of Justice ..	Abdur-Rahman al-Kayyali.
Minister of Agriculture and Commerce ..	Tawfiq Shamiyyah.

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642 are not removable except by the action of the Supreme Court of Justice.

Political Parties

• 665 668 Since 1946 political parties in Syria have been little more than côteries grouped temporarily around individual leaders. It is hard to distinguish between the personalities and the policies of the Nationalist and the Populist Parties, for individuals and groups divided differently on different matters. In fact, there have been only two main parties, those in power and those waiting to accede to power. The two chief parties in opposition have been the Nationalist Bloc and the People's Party, groups of men who also called themselves Liberals or Constitutionalists. These two parties' main concern has been to maintain or to establish themselves in power; both have naturally been nationalist in sentiment but no distinctive programmes or tendencies are to be seen except in the more extreme political groups.

The Communist Party and its leader, Khaled Baqdash, went underground in 1947 and since then the interests of Communism have best been served in Syria by those who, while not adopting the theories of the Communists, share with them a dislike for the Western Powers. Chief in this category is the Muslim Brotherhood, one of whose leaders, Shaikh Maarouf Dawalibi, has said that he would prefer Russian to Western domination. In 1947 an attempt was made by the Brotherhood to obtain sufficient weight in Parliament to resist the encroachment of Western ideas and amusements, but in January 1952 the Muslim Brotherhood and all political parties were suspended. Although nationalist politicians can claim much of the credit for the achievement of independence, to the 'man in the street' politicians have since been discredited, and it may be that a slower approach towards parliamentary democracy will yield results that were denied to the post-war precipitancy.

Political History since 1945

The Nationalist Party came into office in 1943 to wrest independence from the French, whose withdrawal removed also the only plank in the party's political platform. Their stock declined more rapidly when the conduct of the Palestine war and internal government aroused general disapproval. In 1947 the Populist Party came into power but Jamil Mardam, the Nationalist Party Premier, retained his place; from 1946–8 Mardam showed his skill as a tactician in controlling a Chamber in which his supporters were in a minority. In 1948 President

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Quwatli received an extension of office, but the completeness of the military failure in Palestine and the rising cost of living at home increased dissensions among the politicians and dissatisfaction among the people and in the same year Khaled al-Azm, the Populist, took over the premiership. To most Syrians this change meant little, for Syria's material progress since the war has been achieved despite rather than because of the efforts of her politicians. The change of Government did nothing to reduce the people's dissatisfaction and the political atmosphere was only cleared by a coup d'état by Colonel Husni az-Zaim, a Kurd with long army service, on 3 March 1947. He took control and arrested the President and other politicians; finding insufficient support in the Parliament, he dissolved it and became himself first Prime Minister, then Marshal, and then President. When first he took power he won popular support by the spate of positive legislation he issued, but he was soon corrupted by power into becoming arrogant at home; and in quarrelling with the Hashimite neighbours, Iraq and Jordan, he showed himself too friendly with Egypt for the liking of some Syrians. Although nearly 90 per cent of the electorate had voted for Zaim, there was little public outcry when Colonel Sami Hinnawi, on 14 August 1949, overthrew and killed Zaim and his Prime Minister, Muhsin Barazi. Hinnawi ostensibly returned to his barracks leaving Hashim al-Atasi as President and Khaled al-Azm as Prime Minister, with a mixed Cabinet including Rushdi Kekhya of the Populist Party and Akram Haurani, leader of his own party. In November 1949 elections were held and these confirmed Atasi as President, but a dispute arose concerning the terms of the presidential oath. The bone of contention was, in fact, Hinnawi's leaning toward a pact with Iraq, and so to estrangement with Egypt and Saudi Arabia. A pact with the Hashimis was anathema to Haurani and also to his associate Lieut.-Colonel Adib Shishakli, who brought about the third military coup on 19 December 1949. Hinnawi was allowed to leave the country but was later killed in Beirut by an avenger of Barazi.

Colonel Shishakli had fought against the Jews in Palestine and had been Chief of Police and Security under Marshal Zaim; he had been a member of the Syrian People's Party and so fell out with Zaim over the case of Antoun Saadeh.[1] He is a professional soldier with no strong family or political ties to those who had hitherto ruled Syria. Shishakli has kept in the background but retained a veto over the decisions of the politicians and a firm hand on the army, posting to distant stations

[1] See below, p. 479.

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or retiring officers who showed signs of becoming dangerous. In 1952 he played a large part in endeavouring to give a firm foundation to the new Umma Party and has also made rather more public appearances than at first.[1]

Khaled al-Azm's Cabinet had no common policy to bind them together and resigned in June 1950 to give way to a wholly Populist Cabinet in which Colonel Fawzi Silu took the Defence portfolio as the army's nominee. The rest of the year saw minor constitutional changes and there were stirrings of dissent amongst the military leaders which came to light in the murder of the Commander of the army air force and in an attempt on the life of Shishakli. In the autumn of 1950 pro-Hashimite politicians were out of favour and most of the time in prison. In March 1951 the premiership changed hands; al-Azm was succeeded by Nazim Qudsi, a Populist with no hatred for the Western Powers. Qudsi tried, but failed, to limit the authority of the army; al-Azm again took office, but he, too, found no support in the Parliament. With Shishakli's backing, a new Government was formed in August 1951 by Hasan al-Hakim who could not, however, agree with the attack on the proposals for a Middle East defence organization made by his Foreign Minister, Faidi al-Atasi. Hakim resigned and, in November, a period of muddle was resolved by another coup by Shishakli, as the result of which many of the politicians who had recently held office were imprisoned. At the end of 1951 Parliament was dissolved and Colonel Silu was appointed Chief of State *ad interim* and the government carried on by the senior civil servants.

In January 1952 the Muslim Brotherhood, and in April all political parties, were dissolved and the military rulers passed legislation to forbid students, trade unions, and sports clubs from taking part in any political activity. At the end of the year General Shishakli, now Vice-Premier and Chief of Staff, supported the formation of a new political party known as the Arab Liberation Movement, in the hope that parliamentary life could gradually be restored. In the following summer (21 June 1953) he announced a new constitution on the presidential model, based on 'the aims and aspirations of the people', giving executive power to the President but 'permanent power of control' to the Chamber of Deputies. A referendum held on 10 July resulted in the adoption of the new constitution and the election for a period of five years of Shishakli as President and Premier. A new electoral law, promulgated on 1 August, prepared the way for elections on 9 October, and at the beginning

[1] See Alford Carlton, 'Syria Today', *International Affairs*, January 1954.